



Memory Board

Jane Rule

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For forty years David Crown has kept his twin sister Diana a secret. Until his wife's death, not even his children -- Diana's nieces and nephews -- have known about Diana and her lifetime companion Constance. But now David seeks to bridge over those years and recapture the closeness of childhood, to become part of Diana's life, to have her be a major part of his.

For the independent, irascible Diana, the overtures from her brother are an unwelcome intrusion. Retired from her medical practice, she spends her days fully occupied with Constance, for whom memory is increasingly a sometime thing.

David, growing ever more fond of the enchanting Constance, struggles to win her trust... and Diana is inexorably drawn into the events and drama of David's family life.

In Memory Board the incomparable Jane Rule gives us her tenderest, most poignant, most humor-filled novel... and brings to us altogether fresh insights into living and loving and the nature of commitment.

Memory Board Details

Date : Published 1987 by Macmillan of Canada

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Author : Jane Rule

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From Reader Review Memory Board for online ebook

Jo-anne says

Absolutely loved this book. Read it by accident as I had loaned to someone over 20 years ago and they returned it while doing a bookshelf cleaning! Turned out I had never read it, although I have a great many of Jane Rules books.

What a marvellous writer. Being set in Vancouver in the mid 1980's it was a bit of a walk down memory lane. Rule's writing is so easy to read and her characters are fully fleshed (unlike the Urquhart I just read :() An interesting look as well at the gay community in the 80's and the attitude towards AIDS HIV which was just becoming a huge health issue.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to have a different perspective on what families can mean to each other and how they can both be a bane and a salvation.

Dee says

\$11 for a book published five years ago, with no reviews from verified purchases, seems a little steep.

Added to Wishlist.

Donna Herrick says

This book weaves together so many threads of the brokenness of life, lovingly, tenderly. Aging, dementia, lesbianism, ostracism, reconciliation. This book is now one of the models for how I try to treat people.

CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says

Jane Rule's 1987 Memory Board was recommended to me as the novel I should start with when approaching this Canadian lesbian writing legend who passed away in 2007. I followed the advice of the professors who gave me a quick Jane Rule 101 via facebook (thanks Wendy and Douglass!) and read Memory Board before being familiar with any of Rule's other writing, so I can't confirm (yet) that for me this is indeed her finest work. I can say, though, that it is definitely a book written by an experienced writer in firm control of her craft and the narrative at hand. Although it's a novel, Memory Board is also a calculated psychological character study that has more going on in the heads and hearts of the characters than anything conventionally called action. There are a few events, of course, but Rule deals with these developments in such an understated manner that even the revelation that one of the minor characters has AIDS doesn't feel as shocking as it ought to....

read the rest of my review on my website: <http://caseythecanadianlesbrarian.wor...>

Nina says

This is a Kitchen Sink book (as in, toss in everything but the kitchen sink). The central plot line is too slender to support a novel: estranged twins reunite without much fuss. So Rule tosses in complications: one twin has a partner who is suffering from dementia; a young boy (an artist, of course, We Duck for Cliches) gets AIDS; the twin who is a father deals with a misbehaving adult child; let's do a travelogue to a US desert tourist town--you get the idea.

Diana, the doctor lesbian twin, is oh-so-accepting of the AIDS boy, although she has no contact with the gay community in general, and no background in AIDS, and has shown a rather rigid approach to pretty much everything else. One gets the feeling that since the book is set in the '80s, Rule felt she had to include what we used to call the Plague. Yet her distant and dispassionate descriptions of the dying boy indicates she probably didn't have any direct experience here. Those of us who survived the '80s in NYC, watching our friends die, can be forgiven, I hope, for being offended by this attitude.

Rule's sentences are sometimes oddly constructed so they need to be read twice to get their sense. It's often a missing comma, or a clause stuffed in the wrong spot. Annoying, but not a deal breaker. When balanced against her insights into human nature, this becomes negligible.

I suppose, as usual, my fundamental complaint about this book is there isn't much to it. Have I become so cranky in my own old age that I can't bear a book that ends with Happily Ever After?

Faith Reidenbach says

One of North America's most celebrated novelists tells the story of a 65-year-old man who wants to re-engage with his lesbian twin sister, Diana, after a 40-year estrangement. He also expects his daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren to engage with an aunt they never knew they had. Diana is still living with her partner of 40 years, who now has Alzheimer's disease (or some form of dementia). This book gives us deep insight into that disease, without being grim, and depicts a long-term relationship that's intriguingly outside the norm.

Jane Rule's prose is a bit dense and slow for me. (At the risk of sounding like I'm in Creative Writing 101, I'd summarize it as too much telling, too little showing.) But even a bad novel by Rule is better than 90% of lesbian novels, and this is not one of her bad novels. In fact, it's the best of hers that I've read.

Barrett says

I read this book several years ago and it haunts me still. Beautifully evocative. A wonderful cautionary tale.

Sharon says

Jane Rule was ahead of the curve when she published this story about sharing life with a person with memory loss. It is not dark the way the elegy about Iris Murdoch's struggle with Alzheimer's is, a window filmed with grime, bile, anger and fear. Instead, *Memory Board* is gentle and loving, so much so that I wondered if Rule succumbed to fantasy, but just as aging brings out different aspects of people, so too, must dementia.

Rule takes the reader into a warm home in which the long-term couple lead cozy lives and the blank moments are taken in stride with resourcefulness and good humor. Constance, the one who needs the memory board to manage her day, recognizes Diana and is for the time being spared the fear of having no idea who shares her bed. Both women are blessed with good sense and confident dispositions, comfortable with the relationship they have tended, at ease with the once jagged edges now smoothed by loving regard. They each possess an independent sense of self that has accommodated commitment with minimum compromise. Their golden pond is peaceful, even the presence of another romantic partner in the form of Jill, does not rock their boat.

Diana has accepted Constance's non-monogamy and Jill has accepted the couple as a natural unit, something that leaves her free to fully inhabit being the "other woman." There is no contest for affection here; the gals learned long ago how to share their toys.

In this Eden with a few bent trees, comes Diana's twin brother, David. Rule has never lacked courage as a writer and she uses it here to explore David, from the inside out, amid trust issues stirred by his desire to reconnect.

The novel concerns marriage (same-sex and heterosexual), prejudice, trust, change, reliability, family and love. It focuses on what is broken and what can be repaired. *Memory Board* reflects the homophobia of the late 1980's. Spending time with Rule's Diana is like being invited to enjoy intelligent conversation in a flawed world that has, above all, decency and order.

Aryeh says

This is the author that failed to impress me with 'Desert of the Heart', but I'm glad I gave her another shot. Within the first few pages of this one, I was hooked. The only downfall was the existential ending. Generally a feature I like in books, but in this case I feel like it didn't fit. I desperately wanted a happy ending or at least a more resolved one, and what I got was a real one. You can read other reviews to get the story line. What I have to say about this book is that Rule did an excellent job of both creating a political-sexual-societal view time capsule while at the same time writing a slightly dated (a CD player was the new gadget of the year!) but emotionally timeless piece. Rule finally broke out of her own box: this is a book that includes queer characters without being about queer characters. A good read.

Beth M Prewett says

A good reminder.....

Of the early struggles of glbtaq persons. A powerful love story, involving many people. A reminder of how deep family ties can be.

Michèle Dextras says

I read this book after listening to an interview between Jane Rule and Peter Gzowski when it first came out. It was such a tender book, beautifully written and poignant. A good friend of mine had "come out" the summer before and this book along with Ms. Rule's other book I subsequently read, helped me understand and accept my friend for who she was.

The book in particular also helped me later in life, understand aging and Alzheimer's disease and allow me to approach and accept people who suffer from this disease more easily, more naturally. Of of my all time favourite books.

I have just re-read this book, not something I often do, and it is as poignant as ever. It gives a good idea of how society has evolved since the book was first published in 1987.

Jocelyn says

3.5 rating.

JoyfulK says

In this classic novel set in the mid-1980s, Jane Rule creates a cast of unforgettable characters in twins Diana and David, who have been estranged since just after World War II. The plot centers around David and Diana's reconciliation and the weaving together of their lives and extended family in their senior years. A touching and beautifully written novel.

Erika Nerdypants says

This is possibly one of the loveliest books I have read. There are so many layers in the story of David and Diana, estranged twins who are recently reunited, and I realized that had I read this book 20 years ago, it might not have spoken to me the way it did now. There is the love story between Constance and Diana, who have been together for forty years, and who now have to cope with Constance's memory loss and slow slide into dementia. David has his own struggles as he is trying to strike a balance between letting go of his adult children without losing a sense of belonging and family. The writing is lyrical, the descriptions of gardens and the desert evocative, but for me the real prize here is in how deftly and sensitively Rule handled her characters. Beautiful.

Rainbowgardener says

Jane Rule is another of my favorite authors. She writes about lesbian characters not because they are lesbians and not making a big deal of it, just as human beings. This one is a tour de force. An older man who reconnects with his lesbian twin sister after 40 years of estrangement. The sister has a long time partner with some unspecified dementia similar to Alzheimers. The book is tender, moving, a little sad, but not grim. It is the relationships they all have and how they all cope with the dementia. The partner is a very sympathetic character, still a witty and lively companion, not just someone with a disability.

Marni says

Delightful read about a 60 yo woman with memory problems. I like the author's way of describing her non-sequiturs: "They were like messages in bottles washing up after years on the shores of her consciousness."

Gary R Borman says

Engaging family journey

I was caught up in this journey between a brother and sister . Having gone through a similar situation it was a inspiration to embrace family, they are really the only true friends

Mom says

Memory Board is the story of twins estranged in young adulthood who reconnect as older adults. I liked a lot about the book: the focus on a long-time couple caring for one another with gentleness and mutual respect; a portrayal of Alzheimer's that is realistic but not grim; a story that treats lesbians as individuals rather than as stereotypes or as representatives of a "minority group."

Often I felt that the author was telling me too much about the characters instead of letting me discover them through their actions/thoughts. Nevertheless, these were intriguing characters, characters that I cared about, characters I liked. A gentle, humorous, emotionally intimate book.

Pat says

This is one of the first novels by Jane Rule that I had the pleasure of reading. Once finished I went in search of all her others. This is an amazing story of love, understanding and coping with the trials of Alzheimer's disease.

Candy says

The characters were older people, one with memory loss, one with limited mobility, and a widower. I liked how they helped the person with memory loss by saying, "Let me remember that for you". Then they proceeded to tell her about her own past that they were involved in. I do especially like books where people are kind to each other, and this is one of those.
